

Remarks by Acting Under Secretary Nauert at
Bangladesh's National Day Reception
Wednesday, March 28, 2018
Embassy of Bangladesh, Washington, D.C.

(As prepared for delivery)

Good evening, it is my pleasure and honor to be here celebrating Bangladesh's national Independence Day.

Thank you for your very kind introduction **Ambassador Ziauddin**. It is wonderful to see you again. Your many years of service to your nation are a credit to you and the skill of the diplomats of the Bangladesh Foreign Service. I appreciate you inviting me here this evening.

My participation in tonight's event has special meaning for me as my trip to Bangladesh last November was my first overseas visit as the Department of State's Spokesperson. While there, I participated in the U.S.-Bangladesh Partnership Dialogue on ways to strengthen and grow our bilateral relationship in such areas as trade and commerce, countering terrorism, development, maritime security, and military cooperation. I also had the chance to meet many of Bangladesh's dynamic young people at the U.S. Embassy's Edward M. Kennedy Center and was struck by their warmth and their friendliness toward the American people.

I was also deeply moved by my visit to Cox's Bazar and to see the Bangladeshi people opening their doors and their hearts to the Rohingya fleeing violence in Burma.

Bangladesh has the profound gratitude of the American people for all that you have done and continue to do to provide comfort to those in such great need.

The close bonds between our two countries have never been more essential – and Bangladesh's leadership more vital – than during this tragic

humanitarian crisis. To support your efforts, the United States government, in close coordination with the international community, has provided nearly \$110 million in humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya and host communities in Bangladesh since last August. We will continue to work hand in hand with you on this issue, not only through the provision of aid, but through sustained support for the voluntary, dignified, and safe return of Rohingya to their homes in Burma.

Our cooperation in responding to this crisis is the fruit of a strong bilateral relationship that we seek to enhance even further. Decades of U.S. development assistance and private-sector investment have fueled Bangladesh's extraordinary social and economic progress, and U.S. exporters are well positioned to help take Bangladesh's economy to the next level, by delivering the highest quality goods and services in the world.

Our security forces also partner closely to ensure regional maritime security, defeat terrorists who threaten our citizens, and strengthen UN peacekeeping. It is encouraging to see Bangladesh play an important, growing role in training and supporting international peacekeeping forces, including by hosting the recent "Shanti Doot 4" training exercises in Bangladesh earlier this month, which brought together over 1,000 participants from more than 30 countries, including 50 U.S. service members. It is fitting that your nation hosts such trainings, with Bangladesh now celebrating 30 years of participation in UN peacekeeping deployments. Your expertise is of great value to the world. We are all thankful for the Bangladeshis who serve in the face of extreme hardships and deeply grateful to the 135 brave peacekeepers who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

As Bangladeshi peacekeepers promote peace and freedom throughout the globe, they follow in the courageous example of the founding father of Bangladesh. During my visit to Bangladesh, I had the good fortune to visit the **Bangabandhu** museum, a truly inspiring memorial to his life and legacy. In his celebrated speech on March 7, 1971, considered by many to have sparked Bangladesh's independence struggle, she said, "Whether Bengali or non-Bengali, Hindu or Muslim, all are brothers, and it is our

responsibility to ensure their safety.” Let us honor his wisdom and spirit and strive together for a peaceful, prosperous Bangladesh where all are considered brothers and sisters and guaranteed their rights, no matter their class, creed, politics, or birthplace.

Our shared belief in the potential and value of all of Bangladesh’s people is a central pillar of our partnership. And as we prosper together through trade and investment, we have faith that you will continue to champion the cause of peace and freedom throughout the Indo-Pacific and across the world.

Tonight, we celebrate Bangladesh’s many great achievements since it became an independent nation, and we look forward to an even brighter future. Thank you all for your presence. Mr. Ambassador, thank you for the invitation to be here, and congratulations on the anniversary of Bangladesh’s independence.